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1. A ngari ko le ye ngo (ngari is a word of the archaic language which expresses submission.)

Each person responds by striking their genital organs with the little finger: "It is well humiliated" (2).

[826]

2. A ngari ko karu. The little finger is the symbol of the whole person; to strike with it is to acquiesce with all one's being.

They are led to the door of their home where the village elders of both sexes are gathered; they repeat their apologies to which the same response is given, accompanied by the same gesture of acquiescence.

[304] The chief of the Komo and three elders of his age grade who have never broken any taboos led them to the river bank where they undergo a new circumcision for the man and a new excision for the woman; the blood which is a gift to Faro must fall into the water. This operation is called "purification of the foreskin" (yiriyiri tige) and the pain suffered has an expiatory value.

The sixth day after the operation the members, gathered on the village square (3), dance and sing to the rhythm of the Komo, which

3. This ceremony, called daworo is comparable to that celebrated on the sixth day after circumcision.

is furiously beaten out, in the following words:

"Circumcised children, it is not good to break the tahoo of the anus. I am telling you, Soma and members of the society, do not count their faults. Faro "(ter) (4).

4. (I ye ye) boloko dew tne tyẽ mafi boda la; nye fo aw ye somaw moko ka na jigi u la; faro (ter). That is to say, "forgive them." The word anus here replaces the word genitals which, according to propriety, is not spoken.

[195]

*173 Dyoni Kolé, that is, a man named Kolé who came from Dioni.

Mamari himself had no fixed residence and his presence in a vicinity was always a source of anxiety for any who might cause him displeasure. It is said that one day he told the almami Ousman, who was somewhat a friend of his: "I intend to establish my home at Ségou-Sikoro." "Fine! (1)" said the

●[95]

1. This expression "a nyana" is an evasive answer, often used to hide hostility. See many examples in Chap. 7 following.

almami, who was ready to leave when Mamari shortly afterward added: "On second thought, I'd rather build a 'New-Ségou' (Ségou-koura)." "Fine!" repeated the almami Ousman. However, Mamari again changed his mind and summoned the almami Ousman Dyiré in order to hand over to him the responsibility for affairs at Ségou-Sikoro. Since the old Moslem had no wish to get too intimately involved with his turbulent neighbor, he declined the honor and invented an excuse for a trip to Togou.

Around this time, the Somono Tyéro people, migrating from the Bobo country, arrived at Ségou and obtained permission to remain there. Soon after, the people of Kong, who had recovered from their defeat, appeared on the frontiers of the Ségou country. Since they were warlike and well armed, they were redoutable adversaries and indeed they very nearly routed Mamari. It is said that in the decisive battle Mamari owed his victory solely to the Somono Tyéro people who routed the Kong forces by causing a swarm of bees to attack them.

[44] Old Ton-massa died during this engagement, and Mamari felt the loss all the more keenly because the soothsayers he had consulted predicted that his own run of good fortune would vanish with the old man. However, he arranged for a replacement for the deceased old man and gave his duties to a slave whom he bought from the Somono people at Néré-koro.

In that same year he modified the tax which had been required of his followers and proclaimed that in future instead of the di-songo, they would only have to give him the grain which

[119] Chapter 2

Concepts

1. Beliefs

195 826 The Bambara, like ourselves, has a sense of inner life and he expresses it in his language through figurative expressions which, in a sense, localize his sensations.

The eye, whose lens reflects everything that goes on around us, is, for the Bambara, a kind of mirror of the inner life: to be sad, nye na-fin, means "to have a somber eye"; to be cheerful, nye na-dye, means "to have a bright eye"; to be beaten down, nye na-koro, means "to have an eye that is old."

The head is the seat of decision, will and pride. To be active, kun' kene, is "to have an ardent head"; to be tenacious, kun' gwele, is "to have a hard head."

All emotional life is concentrated in the heart. A man who has proper feelings, a son' ka nyi, "has a good heart"; one who is bad, a son' ka dyugu, "has an evil heart." In a more general sense, anything that acts within (kono) us is a be n-kono, literally "it is within myself," meaning "I think, I intend, etc."

It is noteworthy that for these people life resides especially in two organs, the heart and the liver. The most solemn oath among them always contains the phrase: i ka n son' ni m bien' ta or "take my heart and my liver," that is, "destroy me, annihilate me, by removing these two knots of life."

774 195 In addition to these figurative expressions, which are common to [120] all languages, there are abstract terms which serve to express all that we imply in the words "life," "soul," etc. In Bambara, ni is "physical life," characterized by the drawing of breath (ni), which begins and ends with life. Dusu is emotional or moral life; si is duration, in the sense of living and also of becoming.

774 The Bambara does not conceive of a body's shadow as being caused by the interception of light by that body. For him

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18| The Bambara has a very highly developed sense of this idea of justice and there is nothing he resents more than injustice or a denial of justice. His resentment is stubborn and his vengeance, which may be deferred under a show of indifference, is implacable. The chronicle of Ségou is rich in pertinent examples. There was Ngolo Dyara, bringing murder and disaster on his own relatives in order to satisfy his hatred for having been sold into slavery by his uncle and not ransomed by any of his relatives. There was Kégné Mari who, watching the murder of Touro-koro in the Komo wood, expressed his vengeance finally fulfilled by saying: "Remember how, falsely accusing me of adultery with one of your wives, you had me lashed? And how on that day I told you that even though I were lying on the ground, if I could touch you with my foot, I would lay you low? Here at last is the day of my vengeance!" Similar examples are innumerable.

If he is powerless against injustice, the Bambara will wait patiently and, each time he has to speak, will dissimulate his weakness in formulas which have a double meaning, such as
[95] O do!, meaning "That's it!" O nya-na, meaning "Oh well!" Tigi!, meaning "That's true"; and other similar expressions. At the same time, he is repeating to himself his proverb: don' m'i fantan', a bla k'a teme, meaning "Don't pay attention while you are weak," that is, "Wait until I am strong enough to take vengeance (lit., to pay you back)."

18| This instinctive feeling for justice accounts, in a certain measure, for the family bonds made up of reciprocal rights [131]
571 and duties between parents and between them and their children
626 and, by an analogy of which we shall see other examples, between master and slave and between chief and subject. The obligation to respect all pacts concluded in the form of vows, oaths or fraternal alliance rests on the same basis. And it is the same notion that inspires the repression of acts which are almost universally condemned: perjury, treason, false witness, slander,
[69] theft and murder. It sustains the tireless persistence of the pleader who will go through endless lawsuits to obtain redress for a wrong done to him or to one of his people. And it gives strength to public vengeance against the sorcerer.

857 use corporal punishment.

From this early age, therefore, a Bambara is subject to the corporate discipline which will henceforth dominate his whole life, for the same sort of discipline prevails in the adult brotherhoods.

857 292 [782] The genie-protector is honored by offerings, [237] sacrifices, and ritual dances. When they perform these dances, the n-Tomo-den' take turns wearing the ceremonial mask and costume. The mask has the form of a human face surmounted by a number of vertical horns (five to eight of these) and decorated with a few cowries. The costume consists of a dloki (a kind of blouse with wide sleeves) and a pair of long trousers, which completely cover the body. If the costume is yellowish-brown (basa) or white (dye), the association is called "n-Tomo-fin' (black n-Tomo)" or "n-Tomo-dye (white n-Tomo)," respectively. Is this costume supposed to represent the adepts' conception of their protector's appearance? No. As in all sects, it is intended to differentiate the officiant from the profane world (1).

[536] [831]

1. Some of these associations give a kind of public performance from which they derive profit. Notably, they exhibit a kind of puppet called peremperen' (dancers) which members of the n-Tomo manipulate in a more or less comical manner; often one of the puppets represents a man and the other a woman, and their movements abound in the obscenities which are so popular with the onlookers.

831 857 [534] A wooden phallus (or a small board) is commonly used to summon the n-Tomo-den' to meetings. This is tied to the end of a rope and whirled like a sling, producing a noise which the operator can vary and which carries a considerable distance. This apparatus is called n-Tomo-ulu, translated as "dog of the n-Tomo." [195] It should be noted that the words used in the brotherhoods usually have a double meaning, with a special sense under a vulgar form. For instance, the word ulu means both

857 "dog" and "the sexual parts of a man," and it seems evident
831 that the expression n-Tomo-ulu should be taken in the latter
●195 sense. This is all the more likely since in the similar organization among the Khassonké the same apparatus is called khe-fengo, literally, "thing of a man," that is, "sexual parts of a man."

857 The great festival of the association takes place every
796 year after the harvest and does not differ essentially from the one celebrated at the same time by all the brotherhoods. It involves offerings and sacrifices to the genie-protector, communion by the n-Tomo-den' at a corporate banquet, and the admission of new members. The following is a detailed description. [238]

At the instigation of the n-Tomo-tigi, the brotherhood's field has been harvested and to the grain collected has been added whatever the boys could obtain from their families or friends by any means, even theft. From this millet the n-Tomo-
[273] tigi has had dlo (beer) prepared, which is drunk in great quantities on such occasions. The "elders" (koro-u), relatives, and friends can be counted on to send their contributions in kind.

Each n-Tomo-den' is given a little outfit appropriate to the occasion. The ceremonial costume is put in order; the dloki and trousers are washed and ironed, if need be, and the mask is rubbed with vegetable butter (si tlu) to give it gloss.

On the day set, everything is in readiness. Many gourds of dege (1) and to (2), numerous jars of beer (dlo), and also

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1. Dege is made by putting coarsely ground millet into a small quantity of water.

2. A native mush.

some kola nuts have been assembled, along with sacrificial victims.

857 The n-Tomo-den', each leading a chicken on a string,
796 go to the meeting place in single file, with the n-Tomo-tigi
712

695 or in the chief's vestibule, that is to say, under the light of a certain
643 constellation and witnessed by the founding ancestors who link the judge with the supernatural powers. The Fama was seated on a throne perched on a platform; at his right were the notables, at his left the griot, the priests, and the old captives; behind him stood the
[195] sofa. The blacksmith or a captive repeated aloud what the Fama whispered, for the Fama should not raise his voice. Neither women nor children could attend the public sessions. Formerly, the mere view of the Fama filled the accused with terror, and he prostrated himself in the Fama's presence. The Fama could put the accused in irons until he was judged (1).

1. V. Paques, "L'estrade royale des Niare" [The Royal Platform of the Niare] Bull. de l'Ifan, Vol. XV (1953), No. 4.

671 Bambara law sought above all to make reparation, to restore order, and only after that to punish.

a. Proofs (2)

2. Passim. Coutumier juridique de l'A.O.F. [French West African Common Law].

695 The plaintiff must prove his case, and the accused must prove his innocence. Elements of proof may be confession, testimony by witnesses, oath taking, expert opinion, and examination of the scene.

If indications of guilt are strong enough, the Fama may force the accused to confess by having him whipped.

Each party may call witnesses in the following order: circumcised men, married women, unmarried girls (who, however, cannot [70] take the oath), and, lastly, children if there are no
[608] other witnesses. The senanku are exempted from bearing witness against each other.

755 cannot cure. In order to become fertile, a sterile woman knots one 7/1
[842] around her wrist or biceps, and a strange tafo it is, taken from the skin of a monkey's hand.

Syphilitic children, covered with pimples and pustules of magnan -- the name with which they adorn this disease -- have chicken droppings for their crême Simon, and this is the ointment of ointments.

[843] Chalk is the specific for pregnant women; to ease the mild discomforts which generally precede maternity, they draw pretty white crosses on the abdomen or on the chest, between the breasts.

2. Death

761 If sickness is not natural, there is all the more reason why death
●195 should not be. In the eyes of the Bambara there is no evil comparable to it. They fear it and its very name makes them tremble. When it is necessary for someone to announce a death or refer to it, he quite often uses a circumlocution in the presence of a member of the family. At the death of a child it is in good taste to say: "A sagira a ko, he has gone backwards," and if the deceased was a grown woman: "She is no more, she has ended her career, she has been buried." The politest of all the expressions concerning married men who have passed from life to death is: "A so yélémana, he has changed his dwelling." The initiates of certain sects cannot bear to be spoken to about death, and the korodouga, of the kouéré or koté sects, for example, get up and leave in displeasure, no matter how little this subject is dwelt upon in their presence.

761 The Bambara are not unaware that Moslems, missionaries, and all Europeans make light of their fetishes and scorn them; therefore in the presence of any of these they direct to God the accusation that He has caused the death of one of their people. This procedure is only a courtesy, an indirect way of respecting the belief of those to whom they speak, whose life they share, and whom they fear. They know that God has the power of life and death over human beings, but they attribute death to Him so seldom, that during seven consecutive years spent in the Sudan I did not encounter a single instance.

/48/ Death is always caused by a wicked person, by an enemy who

7/1 [i.e. A tafo, a string with seven or nine knots. —Analyst.]